Har. 2314

at Monksdene
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Dies Saturni a.d. XXV. Kal. Aug.
post Xtū Nat. MCMLXVII

My Dearest René

Many thanks for yr letter received yesterday. I wrote half a letter in reply yesterday but it wandered off into such a meander that I'm starting again with this one. I find I do that not infrequently — I mean write to someone & find that I've embarked on some matter that has no particular point or is a bore & have to tear it up & start again. In this particular instance what I wrote was a long rigmarole about Welsh & Irish words etc. ~~that~~ & got into such a complex muddle that it would have required another five pages of foolscap to finish, & was probably wholly inaccurate in any case...

No, I had not heard before about your little cottage by the sea to which you propose to retreat in your old age. It sounds marvellous. I suppose that tawny-red colour of the rocks that remind you of Ynys Bŷr may well be because the complex geological strata & outcrops of south-west Wales are the same as those of the south-east coast of parts of Ireland. I have somewhere in my muddle of stuff a more or less detailed map of the geological formation of these islands, but I can't put my hand on it, but I know, from memory, that this is so to some extent — as one would expect on both sides of the narrow channel that separates the two coasts. My impression is that the similarity is confined to the coastal areas — inland the great central area of Ireland is, I seem to recall, regarded by geologists as pretty uniform & simple, whereas that of Wales is extremely complex — it's the coastal areas that show a similarity.

Leaving geology & turning to history you know didn't you that the Dési of your part of Éire established

P.S. N.B.

Just read this scrawl through — so you know what rubbish it contains. I'm getting really worried about this business of leaving out words without noticing, especially when written hurriedly — getting worse at it. D

Not so funny when one writes to someone and says "I can do such a such" when one means "I certainly cannot do such & such."!

Bloody mouse got into this room last night & eat some stuff. I loathe them. I had trouble with them about a year ago or even, but put down some vermin killer & saw no more of them; until now; Shall have to find this stuff & see if it drives them off again — do hope it works. Strange how these small things get on ones nerves. D

②

themselves, at the break-up of the Roman imperium, in what is now Pembrokeshire & that the Welsh name for that south-west area, Dyfed, or in Latin Demetia means the land of the Dési. or, as it's often spelt in 'English', 'Déssi'. As a matter of fact they extended right across south Wales to the Wye & beyond & 'founded' or 'intermingled' with Welsh dynasties — that's proved by the names of chaps & various other evidence — 'ogam' inscribed stones ~~&~~ among other things. I suppose the Ogam alphabet would most likely never have been deciphered were it not that certain memorial-stones in south Wales had on one surface ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ X filius X hic iacet or what not ~~&~~ the same words in Ogams on edge of the stone. And the name of Illtud who ~~had~~ gave his name to Llan Illtud Fawr (Llantwit Major) on the coast not very ~~far~~ west of Cardiff, where there was a very large monasterium in the 5th Cent., is Irish-Celtic in form — it would be Elltud in Welsh-Celtic & in the only dedication to Illtud in northern ~~[illegible]~~ Wales, it is Llanelltud — a place in Merionethshire. No one appears to know ~~[illegible]~~ anything as to how soon the Goidelic speaking chaps became assimilated into the Brythonic-speaking communities. but this fusion of evidently powerful groups of Dési, etc. & the sub-Roman ~~[illegible]~~ British groups is behind the frequently heard journalistic ~~[illegible]~~ tag to the effect that "St David was an Irishman and St Patrick a Welshman". I think it may account, ~~for the~~ in part, for ~~[illegible]~~ certain differences in temperament between ~~[illegible]~~ southern Welshmen & those of the north; the north Welsh are, on the whole more dour & grave than the typical south Welsh.* The Irish of Leinster, the Féni, did invade & establish settlements in north-west Wales, but Cunedda (under Roman ~~auspices~~, it is presumed) came with forces from the Forth ~~area~~ of Scotland & eliminated ~~the~~ Irish settlers in the north ~~[illegible]~~ round about 400 A.D. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ & established, or re-established a definitely 'Brittonic' rule. None the less, the name of the ~~[illegible]~~ Féni is believed to have stuck under the form of Venedotia or Gwynedd. The root of the word is said to indicate a congeries of tribes, or compound of some sort — but of that I am not qualified to speak.

July 9th. Dies Dominica. I fear I've written only another meander.

You know that the name for (St) David in Welsh is Dewi* from the Lat. ~~[illegible]~~ Scriptures, DAVID (one of many confirmations that Lat. V was pronounced W. The odd thing is that no one was called Dewi from the time of St David (5th Cent) until it was revived as a Xtian name in the 19th Cent. or possibly late 18th. ('Romantic etc Revival) but the Irishman I told you about tells me that the Irish form for David is Dáithí, with a dot cancelling the letter 't' & when he pronounced it one recognised a decided similarity to the Welsh pronunciation of Dewi which one most certainly would not guess from the spellings.

* It has earlier written forms such as Degui but that makes no difference to the sound, the gu of Early Welsh became w in Middle Welsh — or sometimes GW as in 'Gwener' from Lat Veneris

* the form 'Dafydd' is another matter & loaned into Welsh much later. It does not occur until the very early 12th centy. & from then on became exceedingly common — as all the thousands of Davieses as a surname show — not to mention 'Taffy'. But it's odd that no one (apparently) was named 'Dewi' after the Saint, until modern times.

* I know it's absurd to generalize, but there is a decidedly more 'gay' ~~&~~ certain more garrulous streak in many south welsh people ~~[illegible]~~ the northerners tend to be more severe or something — possibly, more on their dignity. But of course what difference there is might be due to all sorts of causes.

similar to the one I tore up – except that it's on a different topic – but I shall not tear ~~it~~ this one up – as could start all over again.

Dear Louis B. came to see me yesterday evening – jolly nice seeing – it being some time nearly a year I think since I'd seen him. He asked how you were. We groused away together just as we used to when I was in Sheffield Terrace. He looked awfully well & very busy. I much enjoyed seeing him again.

There was a small bit about our Agenda issue in The Irish Times for July 1st. – well, a ~~[illegible]~~ reproduction really only of the Yaks & a couple or so lines just saying this was from a special issue of Agenda. But I was glad, for William Cookson has had so very little mention ever of Agenda in the press over the years during which he's published it. & it's a one-man job & he works bloody hard on it. There was also on Friday July 7th an enthusiastic bit about it in The Guardian – which should be very helpful. One sentence in it greatly amused me: "This present number, running to 176 pages, is so attractively designed that sixth-form schoolgirls will want to eat it." William C. was highly amused about that. It mentions your name among the contributors, along with Saunders L. Ken C. & others, but says that Michael Alexander's essay (in the opinion of the reviewer, chap called Robert Nye) ~~is the best~~ "gets nearest the meaning of Jones's [illegible] preoccupation". You never know what chaps are going to re-act to most. Anyway I'm gratified The Guardian had this notice of it – it's about a third of a column with a reproduction of our Sally Soames photo., for, as I say above, William C. has had so very little attention ever paid to Agenda by the press.

You ask how I am. Well, about

the same. Bloody tired & frustrated. Had rather a bad winter, I don't mean anything serious, but fibrositis (can't spell it) & one thing & another & have hardly been out at all. Yes, my eyes have been a bloody nuisance – they were bad about a year ago & then got better – I had some new glasses for working with – but then lately not so good again – the bugger of ~~this~~ these oculists glasses is that you keep on having to have slightly different ones – so relatively quickly. – and in fact one needs about fifteen separate pairs – (like dear Desmond!) – just this 'old age' thing I suppose coming on.

Had jolly nice letter from Herbert Read about Agenda – I was sorry he had not been able to contribute. but he was ill in hospital at the time when William C. asked him. with saying he

Was also glad that Ken. C. liked especially The Sleeping Lord as did Saunders & Harman & one or two other chaps. I was particularly pleased about this because I greatly feared that as it is a thing that has to be read aloud & even then is a bit tricky because of the changes in mood (& all the Welsh stuff) I thought it would hardly come across at all just printed. But again, it shows how one never knows. But I am absolutely sure that (for me) there is no other way to make a thing than the way that seems to me necessary as I go along – I mean quite regardless of whether chaps will 'understand' the stuff or not. If I ~~do~~ ever try to consider that, or modify a thing with anything of that sort in mind, it's never any use. I wanted to leave The Sleeping Lord without 'notes' – but clearly the ones ~~touching~~ giving some such idea of the sound of the Welsh words was ~~also~~ a necessity.

I wondered if you recognised in Ysgyryd hill (page 48) the Skirrid of yr James song: Frank Large of the Skirrid Inn. It it was a bit of luck that Ysgyryd, as said in Welsh 'chimes' ~~[illegible]~~ pretty exactly with ~~the~~ 'sky-surries' in the line above – and that Mynydd Pen-y-fal has, again, as said in Welsh, an assonance with ".. hill / & over the level-topped heights / of"

the 'a' in fal should, by rights, I think have a ~~circumfl~~ circumflex accent, fâl, as it's a longish Welsh a but if one gave the pronunciation as 'vahl'* that wouldn't quite work either. it's ~~terrible~~ a terrible ~~difficult~~ business trying to indicate these sounds. Must stop.

Dia's gut (or however it's spelt) – in Welsh it would be Duw bo gyda chwi but more generally reduced in spoken Welsh to Duw bo 'chi or something like that. say Da bo chi = 'Good be with you'

god parts of verb 'to be' with you.

Much love to you & Tom & Ros. DAC.

But I simply make no real progress in Welsh. I know a little more about it, but that's all. Too stupid, too old, to master it. What balls it is to say that if you love a thing enough you can master it. It is not remotely true – at least not in my case. I learn a thing one week & have forgotten it the next.

* the word bal (fal is the mutated form) does not very often occur in site-names. But it happens that my father's home in Holywell was on a hill called Pen-y-bal. There it was not mutated to fal, but I don't know why – either way; up there it was said just like the English word 'ball' – Pen-uh-ball